



Speaker McCarthy: A weakened leader or emboldened survivor?



Incoming House Speaker Kevin McCarthy of Calif., receives the gavel from House Minority Leader Hakeem Jeffries of N.Y., on the House floor at the U.S. Capitol in Washington, early Saturday, Jan. 7, 2023.

By LISA MASCARO
AP Congressional Correspondent

WASHINGTON (AP) — Republican Kevin McCarthy is the new House speaker, but as bruising as it was for him to seize the gavel in a history-making election, it may be even more difficult for the embattled leader to do much with the powerful position — or to even keep it. Like the two most recent Republican speakers, John Boehner and Paul Ryan, McCarthy takes the helm of a restive, rebellious majority split in much the same way as the party itself, between what's left of the Grand Old Party conservatives

and a new generation of tea party-to-Donald Trump hard-liners preferring almost no big government at all. The chaos that erupted in four days of House voting, halting start of the new Congress, is a prelude to the highly uncertain path ahead as McCarthy tries to lead an unruly Republican majority to achieve its priorities and confront President Joe Biden's agenda — and maybe even keep the government from shutting down.

"This is the great part: Because it took this long, now we learned how to govern," McCarthy, who was first elected in 2006, sug-

gested as he rounded toward victory. McCarthy endured a grueling weeklong fight to get here, a speaker's election like no other since the eve of the Civil War. A coalition of 20 holdouts refused to support his speakership unless he yielded to their demands to give away some power. He was forced to roll through 14 ballots before he finally won a majority vote on the 15th vote, but not before the final chaotic scene of shouting between allies and holdouts pushed balloting into early Saturday.

Associated Press

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States target transgender health care in first bills of 2023

By **HANNAH SCHOENBAUM**
Associated Press/Report for America

After a midterm election and record flow of anti-transgender legislation last year, Republican state lawmakers this year are zeroing in on questions of bodily autonomy with new proposals to limit gender-affirming health care and abortion access.

More than two dozen bills seeking to restrict transgender health care access have been introduced across 11 states — Kansas, Kentucky, Missouri, Montana, New Hampshire, Oklahoma, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, Utah and Virginia — for the legislative sessions beginning in early 2023. Bills targeting other facets of trans livelihood



The Utah State Capitol is shown on Feb. 1, 2022, in Salt Lake City. Associated Press

have been filed in many of the same states and are expected in several others with GOP majorities.

Gender-affirming health care providers and parents of trans youths are the primary targets of these bills, many of which seek to criminalize helping a trans child obtain what doctors

and psychologists widely consider "medically necessary care."

Erin Reed, a researcher who tracks transgender legislation, said statehouses where Republicans expanded their margins in the midterms will likely double down on anti-trans legislation this year and

reintroduce some of the more drastic measures that didn't pass in previous sessions.

Of the 35 anti-LGBTQ bills already introduced in Texas, three would classify providing gender-affirming care to minors as a form of child abuse, following a directive last year from Republican Gov. Greg Abbott that ordered child welfare agents to open abuse investigations into parents who let their children receive gender-affirming care.

In Tennessee, the GOP-controlled legislature announced after Election Day that its first priority would be to ban medical providers from altering a child's hormones or performing surgeries that enable them to present as a gender different from their sex. The pre-filed bill would replace present law with more stringent restrictions.

The World Professional Association for Transgender Health said last year that teens experiencing gender dysphoria can start taking hormones at age 14 and can have certain surgeries at ages 15 or 17. The group acknowledged potential risks but said it was unethical to withhold early treatments, which can improve psychological well-being and reduce suicide risk.

Legislation pre-filed this week in Republican-controlled Oklahoma, which passed restrictions last year on trans participation in sports and school bathroom usage, seeks to ban gender-affirming care for patients under age 26 and block it from being covered under the state's Medicaid program.

"This is the worst anti-trans bill I have ever seen filed in any state," Reed said, noting that adult medical transition bans were a "hypothetical escalation" until recently.

Another Oklahoma proposal would prohibit distribution of public funds to organizations that provide gender-affirming procedures to patients younger than 21.

"It's irresponsible for anybody in health care to pro-

vide or recommend life-altering surgeries that may later be regretted," said the bill's sponsor, Republican state Rep. Jim Olsen. "Performing irreversible procedures on young people can do irreparable harm to them mentally and physically later in life."

A similar bill pre-filed in South Carolina, where Republicans control both chambers, also requires that trans adults older than 21 obtain referrals from their doctor and a licensed psychiatrist before they can begin treatment.

Cathy Renna, spokesperson for the National LGBTQ Task Force, said she views these bills as the product of "a permissible climate of hate," driven by disinformation and fearmongering, that made anti-LGBTQ rhetoric more palatable in the years since former President Donald Trump's election in 2016.

"We have politicians, celebrities and just folks in our communities who were given permission under Trump to kind of pick that scab and do and say harmful things without consequence," Renna said. "It unleashed a nightmare Pandora's box of sexism, racism, homophobia, transphobia, antisemitism."

"When you look at the last few years," she said of the LGBTQ community, "we feel like we're under attack in a way that we have not for decades."

Meanwhile, Democrats in some states are taking a more aggressive approach to transgender health protections.

A new California law, effective as of Jan. 1, shields families of transgender youth from criminal prosecution if they travel to California for gender-affirming health procedures, such as surgeries or hormone therapy, from states that ban such treatments for minors. Making California a refuge for trans youth and their parents, the law blocks out-of-state subpoenas and prohibits medical providers from sharing information on gender-affirming care with out-of-state entities. □

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Speaker McCarthy: A weakened leader or emboldened survivor?

Continued from Front

In the end, McCarthy emerges as a weakened speaker, one with less authority on paper than those before him. That's particularly true because he agreed to give the hard-right holdouts a key concession: restoring a rule that allows any single lawmaker to make a "motion to vacate the chair," essentially a vote to oust the speaker from that leadership post. But in some ways, the son of gritty Bakersfield, an oil-and-agricultural heartland in central California, also becomes emboldened as a survivor who withstood one of history's most brutal brawls for power and who prides himself on being an underestimated political fighter.

"Apparently, I like to make history," McCarthy quipped at one point during the raucous week.

McCarthy staked his political career on early backing of Trump, and it was the former president who delivered when needed, making late phone calls to holdouts and "helping get those final votes." When it was finally over, when McCarthy walked into the speaker's office at the Capitol, the sign bearing his name already was hanging.

Plenty of tests await.

Congress faces an agenda



House Speaker Kevin McCarthy of Calif., gestures towards the newly installed nameplate at his office after he was sworn in as speaker of the 118th Congress in Washington, early Saturday, Jan. 7, 2023.

of must-pass bills to fund the government, restock a military whose supplies have been depleted by decades of war and aid to Ukraine, authorize farming programs and raise the nation's borrowing limit to avert an unprecedented federal default.

For the first time as president, Biden will face a divided government, with the House in Republican hands and the Senate still controlled, though narrowly, by Democrats.

Divided government can be a time of bipartisan deal-making as the parties

come together to accomplish big priorities. But more often it results in brinkmanship that has led to stalemates, standoffs and shutdowns.

House Republicans are eager to confront Biden with oversight of the White House's handling of the U.S.-Mexico border, the COVID-19 crisis and other issues, along with investigations of Biden, his family and his administration.

"I came to Washington to challenge the status quo," wrote Republican Bob Good of Virginia in an op-ed before his many votes

against McCarthy. "I intend to keep that promise." Good was one of six Republican who voted "present" in the final roll call.

McCarthy has been here before. In 2011, tea party Republicans took control of the House, confronting the agenda of President Barack Obama and his vice president, Biden. The movement opposed the Washington political establishment and espoused a conservative and libertarian philosophy, advocating for less spending, lower taxes and reducing the national debt and budget

deficit.

McCarthy helped recruit the tea party class, and he went on to become the third-ranking Republican, part of the "Young Guns" with Ryan of Wisconsin and then-Rep. Eric Cantor of Virginia.

Fueled by the tea party, they went on to lead House Republicans into crisis after crisis with efforts to cut federal spending during the "fiscal cliff" of 2012 and federal shutdowns in 2013 as they tried to repeal Obama's health care program.

In 2015, when then-Rep. Mark Meadows, the North Carolina Republican who led the Freedom Caucus and later served as Trump's last chief of staff, threatened a "motion to vacate the chair" — a vote to oust the speaker — Boehner chose early retirement.

McCarthy tried to take Boehner's place, but he dropped out of the race when it was clear he would not have support from conservatives. Ryan ended up with the job. But he, too, retired in the Trump era.

Speaker Nancy Pelosi, D-Calif., did away with the "vacate the chair" rule when Democrats regained the majority in 2019. A seasoned legislator who had made history as the first woman to be speaker, Pelosi ran the House with the strength of experience. □

Associated Press

Outgoing Sen. Sasse knows Trump criticism shapes his legacy

OMAHA, Neb. (AP) — Nebraska's outgoing U.S. Sen. Ben Sasse knows he may be remembered more for his criticisms of former President Donald Trump than for the policies he supported during his eight years in office. Sasse talked about his political legacy with the Omaha World-Herald as he prepared to leave the Senate Sunday to become president of the University of Florida.

Sasse was a prominent Trump critic who joined with a handful of other Re-

publicans to vote to convict the former president at his impeachment trial after the 2021 Capitol riot. Those criticisms led to Sasse being sharply criticized by his own political party in Nebraska even though Sasse voted with Trump 85% of the time and helped get his three U.S. Supreme Court nominees confirmed.

"I'm just sad for him as a human because obviously there's a lot of complicated stuff going on in that soul," Sasse said to the newspaper. "Just at a human level,

I'm sad for him to be that needy and desperate. But at a policy level, I always loved that he kept his word on the judges. ... And so we got to work closely on judges." Sasse said he is especially proud of his work with the Senate Intelligence committee that included setting up a commission on cybersecurity. He said 120 of that group's 190 recommendations have been passed into law.

The University of Florida job will allow Sasse — who studied American history at



U.S. Sen. Ben Sasse, R-Neb., listens during a confirmation hearing for Supreme Court nominee Ketanji Brown Jackson before the Senate Judiciary Committee on Capitol Hill in Washington, March 23, 2022.

Associated Press

Harvard, Yale and Oxford — to return to academia at a much bigger institution. Before he was elected to

the Senate, Sasse led the small, private Midland University in his hometown of Fremont, Nebraska. □

California hit by more storms, braces for potential floods

SAN FRANCISCO (AP) —

California was hit with more turbulent weather Sunday as thunderstorms, snow and damaging winds swept into the northern part the state, preceding another series of incoming storms and raising the potential for road flooding, rising rivers and mudslides on soils already saturated after days of rain. The National Weather Service warned of a “relentless parade of atmospheric rivers” — storms that are long plumes of moisture stretching out into the Pacific capable of dropping staggering amounts of rain and snow.

In the state capital, more than 230,000 customers were without electricity Sunday in the city of about 525,000 residents after gusts topping 60 mph (97 kph) knocked trees into power lines, according to the Sacramento Municipal Utility District.

Joey Kleemann was listening to the winds howling shortly after midnight, wondering whether she should move her car, when she heard a “gigantic, thumping, crashing sound” as a massive tree fell onto the Sacramento home where she’s lived for 25 years.

The gusts were strong enough to rip the tree up from its roots, pulling the



A tree collapsed and ripped up the sidewalk damaging a home in Sacramento, Calif., Sunday, Jan. 8, 2023.

Associated Press

concrete sidewalk up with it.

Cracks in the roof meant rain streamed into her dining area throughout the night. She’s hoping to get a tarp over the damaged area in anticipation of more showers.

“I just had a feeling with the winds. They were scary winds,” she said. “Mostly I focused on: it could be so much worse.”

The weather service’s Sac-

ramento office said the region should brace for an even more powerful storm system to move in late Sunday and early Monday.

“Widespread power outages, downed trees and difficult driving conditions will be possible,” the office said on Twitter.

Evacuation warnings were in place for about 13,000 residents of a flood-prone area of Sonoma County north of San Francisco,

where the swollen Russian River was expected to overflow its banks in the coming days.

The state Department of Transportation warned motorists to stay off mountain roads after closing a stretch of U.S. 395 in Mono County due to heavy snow, ice and whiteout conditions along the Eastern Sierra.

“With the severe nature of this storm, Caltrans is asking all drivers to limit nonessen-

tial travel until the peak of the storm has passed,” the department said in a statement.

The wet weather comes after days of rain in California from Pacific storms that last week knocked out power to thousands, flooded streets, battered the coastline and caused at least six deaths.

The first of the newest, heavier storms prompted the weather service to issue a flood watch for a large swath of Northern and Central California with 6 to 12 inches (15 to 30 centimeters) of rain expected through Wednesday in the already saturated Sacramento-area foothills.

In the Los Angeles area, scattered rain fell during the weekend while stormy conditions were expected to return Monday, with the potential for up to 8 inches (20 cm) of rain in foothill areas. High surf was expected through Tuesday, with large waves on west-facing beaches.

Since Dec. 26, San Francisco received more than 10 inches (25 centimeters) of rain, while Mammoth Mountain, a popular ski area in the Eastern Sierra, received nearly 10 feet (3 meters) of snow, the National Weather Service reported. □



The Calf Canyon/Hermit Peak Fire burns in the mountains near Pecos, N.M., on May 25, 2022.

Associated Press

SANTA FE, N.M. (AP) — New Mexico’s congressional delegation says the U.S. government should make changes to rules proposed for processing damage claims stemming from a historic wildfire sparked by forest managers.

The delegation sent a let-

ter to FEMA on Thursday as the federal agency prepares to wrap up public comment on the rules. The delegation noted that unlike a more affluent part of New Mexico that was devastated by a government-sparked wildfire in 2000, this part of northern New

New Mexico delegation seeks changes to wildfire aid rules

Mexico is more rural, has higher poverty rates and a high percentage of Spanish speakers.

The delegation also said many residents are still reeling from the emotional, financial and physical tolls of the Hermit’s Peak-Calf Canyon Fire and that post-fire flooding has been a big concern for the mountainous areas.

“By providing thorough guidance and adding claims navigators early in the process, FEMA can ensure that claimants have the necessary resources in place to help them quickly and accurately assess

the damages and repairs needed to move forward and receive the compensation as authorized by Congress,” the delegation wrote.

Congress has approved nearly \$4 billion for victims of the 2022 fire so far, and state officials have acknowledged that the recovery process will be long and challenging.

The New Mexico attorney general’s office also has sought changes to the proposed rules. Then-Attorney General Hector Balderas, whose term ended in December, had outlined concerns over

limitations on damages, the lack of a clear appeals process and leadership of the team that will oversee the claims process.

In their letter, U.S. Sens. Ben Ray Lujan and Martin Heinrich and Reps. Teresa Leger Fernández, Melanie Stansbury and Gabe Vasquez pointed to language that caps compensation for the replacement of destroyed trees and other landscaping at 25% of the pre-fire value. They said this does not take into account the degree of damage or the effort required to remediate the damage. □

Marches in Europe support Iran protests, assail government

By N. VAUX-MONTAGNY
Associated Press

LYON, France (AP) — Hundreds of people marched Sunday in France to honor an Iranian Kurdish man who took his own life in a desperate act of anguish over the nationwide protests in Iran.

French police estimated the size of the crowd that gathered for Mohammad Moradi at about 1,000 people. They marched in the city of Lyon, where the 38-year-old Moradi took his own life in December, drowning in the Rhone river.

In videos in Farsi and French recorded before his death, Moradi criticized Iran's leadership and called for solidarity from Western governments against it. The recordings featured him saying, "When you see this video, I will be dead."

The protesters Sunday marched with placards that read "stop executions in Iran" and other slogans. Some traveled from other parts of France.

Hundreds of protesters also gathered in Rome and London in support of the Iranian protest movement.

Moradi arrived in France in 2019 with his wife and was pursuing a Ph.D. in history. His death resonated among the Iranian diaspora.

"Mohammad took his life



Protesters gather at Marble Arch before they march to Trafalgar Square to protest against the Islamic Republic in Iran following the death of Mahsa Amini, in London, Sunday, Jan. 8, 2023.

with incredible courage," said Lili Mohadjer, one of the Lyon march organizers, who addressed the crowd. "His hope was that the media and Western governments continue to support the Iranian people."

The protests in Iran began in mid-September, over the death of Mahsa Amini. The 22-year-old woman died after being arrested by Iran's morality police for allegedly violating the Islamic Republic's strict dress code.

Women have played a leading role in the protests, with many publicly removing the compulsory Islamic

headscarf, known as the hijab.

Sunday's marchers in Lyon shouted Moradi's name. They also observed a minute of silence for him and for two men that Iran said it executed on Saturday for allegedly killing a paramilitary volunteer during a demonstration.

Iran's judiciary identified those executed as Mohammad Mehdi Karami and Mohammad Hosseini, making it four men known to have been executed since the demonstrations began in September. All have faced internationally criticized, rapid, closed-

door trials.

The Lyon marchers also paid homage to victims of the shooting down of a Ukrainian passenger plane in 2020 that killed 176 people. Iran's military mistakenly downed Ukraine International Airlines Flight PS752 with two surface-to-air missiles.

In London, protesters waved Iran's pre-revolutionary flag as they marched to Trafalgar Square and carried banners with pictures of demonstrators killed by the Islamic Republic's authorities. They chanted "woman, life, freedom," a slogan of the Iranian movement. □

Subway train collision in Mexico City kills 1, injures 57



A subway passenger, injured when two subway trains collided, waits to be taken to a hospital, in Mexico City, Saturday, Jan. 7, 2023.

Associated Press

MEXICO CITY (AP) — Two subway trains collided between two stations Satur-

day in Mexico City, killing at least one person and injuring 41, authorities said.

Mayor Claudia Sheinbaum said on her Twitter account that the accident happened on Line 3 of the capital's Metro system, without specifying the cause of the crash between the Potrero and La Raza stations.

Sheinbaum said one woman was killed and 57 people injured, who were taken to seven hospitals. Four people were trapped in the wreckage for a time, including one train driver, who was reported in serious condition. Late in the afternoon, the mayor said 26 of the injured had been released.

Dozens of police and soldiers swarmed into the nearby subway stations,

while ambulances and rescue teams arrived to treat the injured. Edgar Montiel, an electrician who was on one of the trains, said he felt lucky because he had decided at the last minute to enter the next-to-last car rather than the rearmost car, which was smashed up in the crash.

He said he remained on the floor of the car with several passengers amid screams and cries asked for help.

Montiel, who had his left arm and shoulder bandaged, said the occupants of his car had to wait about 30 minutes until paramedics arrived to tend to the injured and help everyone exit the car. □

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Kishida highlights security concerns on trip to Europe, U.S.

By **MARI YAMAGUCHI**

Associated Press

TOKYO (AP) — Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida begins a weeklong trip Monday to strengthen military ties with Europe and Britain and bring into focus the Japan-U.S. alliance at a summit in Washington, as Japan breaks from its postwar restraint to take on more offensive roles with an eye toward China. Kishida's talks with U.S. President Joe Biden on Friday will highlight his five-nation tour that also takes him to France, Italy, Britain and Canada — some of Group of Seven nations Japan has stepped up defense ties with in recent years. His first stop is Paris on Monday evening.

Kishida said his summit with Biden will underscore the strength of the Japan-U.S. alliance and how the two countries can work more closely under Japan's new security and defense strategies.

Japan in December adopted key security and defense reforms, including a counterstrike capability that makes a break from the country's exclusively self-defense-only postwar principle. Japan says the current deployment of missile interceptors is insufficient to defend it from rapid weapons advancement



Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida speaks during his New Year's news conference in Ise, central Japan on Jan. 4, 2023.

in China and North Korea. Kishida said he will explain to Biden the new strategy, under which Japan is also reinforcing defenses on its southwestern islands close to Taiwan, including Yonaguni and Ishigaki, where new bases are being constructed.

"Will will discuss further strengthening of the Japan-U.S. alliance, and how we work together to achieve a free and open Indo-Pacific," Kishida told a NHK national television talk show Sunday, referring to a vision of national and eco-

nomics security cooperation the two countries promote to counter China's growing military and economic influence.

Under the new strategies, Japan plans to start deploying in 2026 long-range cruise missiles that can reach potential targets in China, nearly double its defense budget within five years to a NATO standard of about 2% of GDP from the current 1%, and improve cyberspace and intelligence capabilities.

The idea is to do as much as possible in a short time as

some experts see growing risks that Chinese President Xi Jinping may take action against self-ruled Taiwan, which Beijing claims as part of its territory.

Japan's new strategy has been well received by the Biden administration and some members of the Congress.

Experts say it would also widen cooperation with their main regional partners Australia and possibly South Korea.

"This is an opportunity to rethink and update the structure and the mechanisms

of the alliance to reflect a much more capable partner that's coming," said Christopher Johnstone, senior adviser and Japan chair for the Center for Strategic and International Studies.

He said, however, that Japan's focus on the strike capability and budget is a welcome but "a daunting agenda" that will require a lot of cooperation with the United States.

Paving the way for the summit, Japanese Defense Minister Yasukazu Hamada and Foreign Minister Yoshimasa Hayashi will fly to Washington to meet their American counterparts, Lloyd Austin and Antony Blinken, on Wednesday, followed by separate defense ministers' talks Thursday.

The Biden administration, which also adopted its security strategy in October, expects Japan to assist in the supply and storage of fuel and munitions in case of a Taiwan emergency, experts say. Japan and the United States are also reportedly considering establishing a joint command.

During the talks at the White House, the two leaders are also expected to discuss China, North Korea's nuclear and missile development as well as Russia's war on Ukraine, Japanese officials said. □

Bosnian Serbs award Putin with medal of honor



The highest decoration of the Republika Srpska, Order of the Republika Srpska assigned to Russian President Vladimir Putin is seen during a ceremony in the Bosnian town of Banja Luka, 240 kms northwest of Sarajevo, Sunday, Jan. 8, 2023.

Associated Press

SARAJEVO, Bosnia-Herzegovina (AP) — The Bosnian Serb separatist leader on Sunday awarded Russian

President Vladimir Putin with the highest medal of honor for his "patriotic concern and love" for the Serb-

controlled half of Bosnia. "Putin is responsible for developing and strengthening cooperation and political and friendly relations between RS (Republika Srpska) and Russia," the Bosnian Serb president, Milorad Dodik, said at the awards ceremony in the Bosnian Serb stronghold of Banja Luka.

Dodik, who visited Putin in September in Moscow, has maintained close ties with the Russian president despite Russia's war in Ukraine. The medal will be presented to Putin during the next meeting between the two, Russian Ambassador Igor Kalbukhov said.

"We believe that this award

is an affirmation of the strategic determination of our relations aimed at strengthening the friendship of our brotherly people," he said at the ceremony.

Moscow has often been accused by the West of seeking to destabilize Bosnia and the rest of the Balkans through its proxies in Serbia and Bosnia. Dodik has openly advocated tearing away the Serb-controlled half of Bosnia from a Bosniak-Croat federation to join it up with neighboring Serbia.

A U.S.-brokered peace deal in 1995 ended a war in Bosnia that left at least 100,000 people dead and millions homeless, but left

the country deeply divided between its three main ethnic groups. Moscow has been exploiting the divisions by tacitly supporting Dodik's separatist policies. Dodik awarded Putin on the occasion of "the day of Republika Srpska," which has been deemed illegal by Bosnia's constitutional court. Tensions were running high in Bosnia as the Serbs planned to hold their main celebrations on the outskirts of Sarajevo on Monday, the town they held under siege for three years during the war. Thousands of people were killed in the relentless shelling and sniping of the Bosnian capital. □



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Torch Parade full of music, lights and excitement



ORANJESTAD – After two years, the people of Aruba enjoyed last Saturday a Torch Parade full of excitement and carnival music. Six groups and more than five thousand people were on the streets enjoying the start of the 69th edition of Carnival.

2020 was the last year in which Aruba celebrated a carnival season before the pandemic of Covid-19 arrived in Aruba around March and changed life completely. Many were anxiously waiting this big night to jump, dance and enjoy a season which is a big part of Aruba's culture.

Minister of Culture, Xiomara Maduro together with the organization in charge of organizing Carnival, SMAC, lit the torch and at 7:58 the Torch Parade began its route to officially open the 69th edition of

Aruba's Carnival.

"Aruba opens its 69th Carnival with the Torch Parade. Success to SMAC, all groups and participants. Enjoy safely", Maduro said on her official Facebook account.

During the parade, our reporter spoke to some of the participants and spectators by the side of the road to find out the sentiments and how they are enjoying inside and outside the parade.

"Finally we can celebrate. After two years, carnival is back and we are ready to enjoy – obviously without going overboard. Everyone, go slowly", John Tromp, a participant in the Torch Parade, who was enjoying the fun of the night, commented.

Enthusiasm was high since it was the first parade for the new season of carnival, and this could be felt in

some participants who went all-out and decorated their t-shirts with stones, payet and lights, and even created headpieces with feathers to go with their outfits.

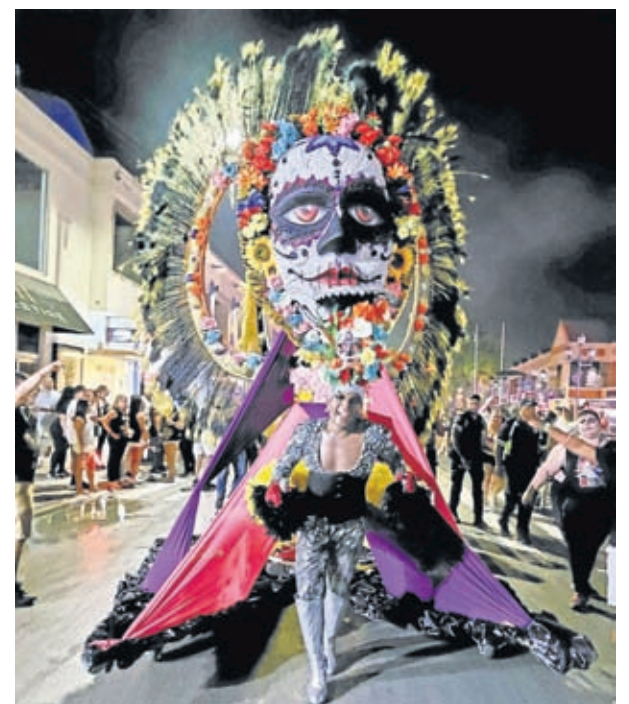
"I love carnival. I am very happy that we can enjoy carnival again. I have been participating for many years, I think it's been over ten years. I am going all-out tonight. My make-up, my outfit, my headpiece. I am ready to enjoy and I am ready for the other parades as well", Joanne Ras indicated.

Spectators by the side of the road were also enjoying the atmosphere and the music of carnival. Jose Hernandez and his family were by the side of the road enjoying the parade as is their custom. "My family and I enjoy carnival. We like going to the parades and having a good time. We stand by the side to

see all the beautiful clothes. Today, the torch parade was really good. A very good atmosphere. We are ready to continue enjoying the rest of the parades", he said.

Cornelia Werleman was also enjoying the atmosphere of the Torch Parade – known as Fakkel – by the side of the road this year. "Normally I go in the parade, but this year I changed my mind and decided to stand by the side and enjoy. I am going in the big parades, but I skipped Fakkel this year. The atmosphere was very good though", she indicated.

Be it in the parade or by the side of the road, there is no doubt that the multitude of people who came out to open the carnival season enjoyed the Torch Parade and are ready to continue celebrating Carnival 69. □



Aqua Grill restaurant: The taste of New England with Caribbean flair



ORANJESTAD — One thing is for certain: Chef Scott Scheuerman and his team are famous for getting people hooked, just like the fish on your plate. You will get the taste of home fused with Caribbean while dining in elegance. Scheuerman will tell how Aqua Grill established its name since opening in 2002, and why it reaped accolades from such prestigious travel publications as Fodor's, who says, "This hip restaurant is heaven on earth for seafood lovers, who will find fresh fish galore..." Now is your chance to taste Aqua Grill's NEW seasonal menu and create a lifetime culinary memory.

'A Scheuer thing'

Secretly, we all know that the success of a restaurant begins in the kitchen. That is where the chef creates his magic and for Aqua Grill the culinary team has won an assortment of awards for their continuous delivery of 'haute-cuisine del mar.' Classic seafood is mingled with contemporary ideas resulting in surprising dishes that soon made the restaurant a must-dine, confirmed by established travel media specialists like Fodor's and Frommer's.

American-born Scheuerman, executive chef of Aqua Grill, is thrilled about 'his restaurant'. "We started out

as a New England style seafood restaurant, patterned after Boston style. But we quickly blended into some Caribbean, local flair... if you will. We do still offer the traditional New England dishes like whole Maine lobster, northern seafood plates like the salmon, tuna and swordfish. We buy also from the local fisherman to offer Caribbean dishes like snapper and grouper which are number one sellers in our restaurant being the most prevalent local fishes. Catches like wahoo, mahi mahi and brasil are welcome too, anything that comes out of the water we embrace."

Fresh import from Boston

Aqua Grill flies in their own shipments on a weekly basis mostly from Boston because the price quality balance is the best, says the chef. "We are unique in this. Number one priority is buying fresh, we mean not frozen. Our original concept is New England seafood and we stick to that concept. They have a wonderful assortment of oysters and lobsters as well." Aqua Grill also offers international fusion type of menu items; actually all you wish for is there. A very balanced menu awaits you. "And we have options for



meat lovers and vegetarians/vegans too. We, however, do not mix it up too much because we believe we do not want to lose our identity as a seafood restaurant," Scheuerman adds.

Sublime menu

Now is the time to indulge in Aqua Grill's dinner experience. The established restaurant offers a sensational menu. We present to you a Raw Bar with among others fresh Oysters on the half Shell, Littleneck Clams, Peruvian Ceviche and Lobster Salad. Steamed Dumplings and Prawns or Steamed Mussels seduce you from the open view kitchen.

After that continue your gastronomic trip to

heaven with the house specialties like Main Lobster, steamed or broiled or maybe you crave for the best Alaska King Crab Legs you have ever tasted?

You haven't reached your destination yet because there are more main course options to blow you away: Seared Chilean Sea Bass, Cioppino or Blackened Tuba are just some to mention. Take a pick out of Aqua Grill's delicious desserts to finally conclude yes, this beats it all. We will be back for more.□

Aqua Grill

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Drawing of lots for Carnival 69 parcels

ORANJESTAD – The Department of Infrastructure and planning (DIP) announces changes in the application and granting of the precario permit for lots during Carnival 69.

The application form for lots is only available online and can be found to download on the government website; government.aw.

There are four lot applications on each page, so you have to cut the form in four before depositing these in the corresponding draw drum located in the hall of



All participating carnival trailers/floats should pass technical inspection. Not inspected trailers and floats are not allowed in the parades.

In addition, all participating vehicles should have the seal of the technical inspection by the DTI to be able to drive in the parades. It includes all UTVs, ATVs, trucks, chassis, flatbeds, and container trucks. Contact the Department of Technical Inspection DTI for more information.

The Planning Department of the Police Department can be reached at 5852500 from Monday to Friday between 7:00 am and 3:00 pm.

During weekends, float/trailer owners can contact the Police line 100, who will notify the corresponding officer to inspect the trailer/float.

The Police Department urges carnival participants/groups to ensure they comply with all the requirements in time to avoid unnecessary issues. The first carnival parade, the Torch Parade, is on January 7, 2023. Only inspected trailers and floats can participate in the parade. □



the Infra Building.

One must place an AWG. 4,00 stamp on each application. The stamps are available at the post office.

Once the application form is filled out and stamped, you can put them in the corresponding draw drum in the hall of the Infra Building located at Sabana Blanco 68 during regular business days from 7:30 am - 12:30 pm and from 1:30 pm to 5:30 pm. The last day to submit the application form is Thursday, January 19, 2023, and the drawing is on Friday, January 20, 2023.

Attention to the following:

You must fill out the application forms completely to be valid. DIP will discard incomplete applications; Application forms should include an email address and a valid personal tax number (persoonsnummer). Spectators parcels:

The petitioner should indicate the preferred choice for the lot on either LG Smith or Vondellaan on the application form; Once drawn, the application is automatically assigned a

parcel number based on the availability of the lots. This year the lots are no longer selected on a map. Vendors parcels:

The vendor must deposit the completed application form for a vendor's lot in the corresponding drawing drum for the location/area the vendor prefers; Once drawn, the application is automatically assigned a parcel number based on the sequence of available parcels. This year the vendor's lots are no longer selected on a map.

IMPORTANT: DIP discards incomplete application forms and assigns the next lot number to the application form drawn next.



Carnaval 2023	
Celebrating 69 years	
OFFICIAL EVENTS SCHEDULE	
FRIEDAY NOV 11	11/11 CARNIVAL STREET PARTY
SATURDAY JAN 07	TORCH PARADE
SUNDAY JAN 08	PRINS & PANTHO ELECTIONS
FRIEDAY JAN 13	CHILDREN & YOUTH QUEEN ELECTION
SATURDAY JAN 14	CHILDREN & YOUTH CALYPSO & ROADMARCH
FRIEDAY JAN 20	TUMBERITO FESTIVAL
SATURDAY JAN 21	67TH CARNIVAL QUEEN & MRS. CARNIVAL
SUNDAY JAN 22	LGBTQ+ ELECTIONS BRUNCH
SUNDAY JAN 22	STEELPAN & DRUMS SHOWDOWN
WEDNESDAY JAN 25	DIA DI BETICO
FRIEDAY JAN 27	CAISO MONARCH FINALS
SATURDAY JAN 28	SUPER SATURDAY SOCA FINALS
SUNDAY JAN 29	PARADA DI BLAAS
FRIEDAY FEB 03	HEBBE HEBBE
SATURDAY FEB 04	CHILDREN'S PARADE NOORD
SATURDAY FEB 04	GRAND TUMBA CONTEST
SUNDAY FEB 05	TRANSFER OF COMMAND
SUNDAY FEB 05	GRAND CHILDREN'S PARADE ORANJESTAD
WEDNESDAY FEB 08	SUNSET PARADE
FRIEDAY FEB 10	CAYA PADEN
FRIEDAY FEB 10	JOUE CITY
SATURDAY FEB 11	JOUEVET MORNING
SATURDAY FEB 11	LIGHTING PARADE
SUNDAY FEB 12	GRAND CHILDREN'S PARADE SAN NICOLAS
SUNDAY FEB 12	BURNING OF MOMITO
THURSDAY FEB 16	PARADA DI LIJZ
FRIEDAY FEB 17	CARNAVAL TA BIDA (JUMP IN)
SATURDAY FEB 18	SAN NICOLAS GRAND PARADE
SUNDAY FEB 19	ARUBA'S GRAND CARNIVAL PARADE
SUNDAY FEB 19	BURNING OF MOMO
MONDAY FEB 20	CARNIVAL MONDAY
WEDNESDAY FEB 22	ASH WEDNESDAY

Aruba's underwater wonderland



ORANJESTAD - Exploring the underwater wonders is something you should definitely do during your stay in Aruba. The underwater world has everything to offer that makes a snorkel trip so exceptional; an impressive, colorful sea life with exotic fishes, turtles and beautiful coral reef. The historic shipwrecks, located on the Aruban seabed are also worth a visit. Aruba is known for its white beaches and blue oceans, which means there are many fascinating under water spots, where you can take your snorkeling gear and we selected the top spots for you.

Tres Trapi

Tres Trapi means tree steps in Papiamentu, Papiamentu is together with Dutch the official language spoken on Aruba. The beach is called Tres Trapi because it is accessible by the tree steps carved into the rocks. Tres Trapi is a small rocky beach, located on the north-western side of the island, approximately 5 to 10 minute drive from Palm Beach. From the unique steps you can easily walk over the beach into the clear and turquoise blue ocean.



While snorkeling you will encounter all kind of tropical fishes and sea stars. The kind of starfish you will find in the Aruban waters is the red cushion sea star. This is a starfish that is commonly found in the shallow waters of the Caribbean sea and if you are lucky during your snorkeling visit to Tres Trapi, you may come across one of the green sea turtles. Respect the animal, keep your distance and enjoy the view. Also remember; it is a once in a life time experience.

Antilla shipwreck

Antilla is a 400-foot-long long ship, built in 1939 in Hamburg, Germany. Antilla came to Aruba, because it had to find a neutral port. When Germany invaded the Netherlands on May 10, 1940, the crew decided to let their own ship sink, to prevent it from falling into the hands of the Dutch Navy. Antilla lies on its portside in Malmok bay, and the sunken world war two ship is now one of Aruba's most popular snorkeling and dive spots. However, the ship wreck can only be reached by boat. The ship is visible from the surface and during your snorkeling trip you be surrounded by hundreds of tropical fishes, but the ship wreck alone is already impressive enough.

Baby Beach

Baby beach; a white beach, with a crystal blue ocean. The beach is located on the southern part of the island. On the way to the famous beach, you will drive through the old capital of Aruba, San Nicolas. The old Aruban culture can be still felt and experienced here, so do not hesitate to get out of your car and walk around for a while. Baby beach is a child friendly beach, since it is shallow and the water has a pleasant temperature. The name therefore fits well with the beach. Baby beach is an excellent beach for snorkeling, especially if you want to go with small children, because the water remains shallow and there are still many underwater wonders to see. In the ocean there is an area marked until where it is recommend-

ed to snorkel and on the beach you will find different facilities. It is a perfect beach to spend your day snorkeling and relaxing.

Mangel Halto

Mangel Halto beach is located in Savaneta, on the southern-west part of the island. The beach is different from the other beaches in Aruba; it is beach full of mangroves. You reach the beach by a bridge through the mangroves and then you will have several entrances to the sea. There are diverse spots where you can enjoy a perfect beach day, wooden stairs made to enter the water and a dock to sit on and enjoy the view. Mangel Halto is also worth a visit for the snorkeling experience. Inside the bay, the water is clear and you find many colorful fish. Outside the bay is a bit more challenging for beginners because of the wind and the waves, but the coral is alive and it is just like snorkel heaven. □





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Chef Urvin Croes

Aruba Birdlife Calendar 2023 handed to minister of Nature

ORANJESTAD – Minister of Transport, Integrity, Nature and Senior Affairs, Mr. Ursell Arends received the Aruba Birdlife Calendar 2023 from Greg Peterson, of the Aruba Birdlife Conservation Foundation.

This year marks 15 years of the publication of Aruba Birdlife Calendar published by Aruba Birdlife Conservation. Once again, no less than nine nature photographers contributed with their bird pictures. They are Damilice Mansur, Ross Boss Wauben, Peter Sprockel, Albert Peterson, Michiel Oversteegen, Michael Tromp, Patrick Peña, Glenda Tromp and Greg Peterson.

The calendars are available for purchase at Best Deal in Paradera; Toko Dakota in Dakota; at four different pharmacies: Botica Eagle, Botica Noord, Botica Maria and Botica Sero Preto; and also at the Op=Op stores in Italiëstraat, Paradera and San Nicolas. Proceeds from the sale of the calendars are used by the foundation for the purpose of conservation.

Greg Peterson, president of the Aruba Birdlife Conservation Foundation is very satisfied with the new calendar and very thankful to all those giving their contribution.

The proceeds will be invested in awareness projects and nature conservation. One of the projects known in Aruba to which funds will be destined will be the Conservation of Shoco – Aruba's endemic burrowing owl – where artificial nests will be installed in order to improve the possibility of procreation for Aruba's Shoco which is currently in danger of extinction. Also preparations are being made for a website with information about the birds of Aruba.



Minister Ursell Arends receiving the calendar from Greg Peterson of the Aruba Birdlife Conservation Foundation.

Donations are also welcome, and these can be done in the name of Foundation Aruba Birdlife Conservation
Aruba Bank NV
Account number 2402860190. □



ORANJESTAD – Saturday morning, Aruba received the first call of the Evrima cruise ship that belongs to the Ritz-Carlton Yacht Collection at our dock.

During arrival, as it is cus-

Cruise ship EVRIMA of the Ritz-Carlton Yacht Collection arrives in Aruba for the first time

tomary, the ship was saluted by water cannons. This cruise line came to our port in Oranjestad for the first time, and will continue coming to Aruba in the near future. According to a press release by the Ministry of Tourism, what is notable is that the Ritz-Carlton cruise line is very new, and already they set Aruba on their itinerary.

The cruise ship arrived in Aruba with a bit over 200

people. It is not a big cruise, but it is a luxury cruise and it is arriving in our island with affluent tourists who will contribute to the local economy.

Evrima is a cruise ship that can carry a maximum of 300 people. Its rooms consist of only suites, and the price for one is not below five thousand dollars per person. It is a cruise that offers its passengers the first class treatment and a luxu-

ry experience.

Minister of Tourism, Mr. Dangui Oduber said in a press release that he is very glad that the Ritz-Carlton cruise line set Aruba on its itinerary. The minister is glad that the cruise tourism in 2022 saw a recovery of almost 74 percent. For 2023, the expectation is for Aruba to receive around 800,000 cruise visitors, which is very positive news for our island. □

First Council of Ministers for 2023 held in San Nicolas

ORANJESTAD – Last Friday, January 6, the government of Aruba organized the first Council of Ministers for the year 2023 in San Nicolas, in order to discuss various different projects in San Nicolas.



Together with the San Nicolas Business Association (SNBA), Department of Infrastructure and Planning (DIP), Department of Public Works (DOW) and ministers of the Wever-Croes II Cabinet, five interesting projects were presented, with the expectation that they will

generate a flow of tourism and customers for San Nicolas. The goal of the projects is to create jobs for those living in San Nicolas and create economic development for Aruba.

Prime minister Mrs. Evelyn

Wever-Croes on this occasion expressed that the projects are very interesting, and they were for housing, tourism, agriculture, and more. "I am extremely thankful to SNBA for helping us set up the meeting and that through them we

received the presentations. I am very confident that all the projects will become a reality and thus create the progress and wellbeing that we are searching for Aruba in general, but specially for San Nicolas." □

According to a press release, during Wever-Croes I and II Cabinets, this is the fourth time that they organize a Council of Ministers in San Nicolas to deal specifically with issues regarding San Nicolas. There is a lot of work still to be done, and the pandemic hindered many things, while the delicate financial situation of Aruba also created difficulty. But there is faith, vision and determination to achieve the development desired by the people of San Nicolas, according to Wever-Croes. □

CROSSWORD

By THOMAS JOSEPH

ACROSS

- 1 Highway
- 6 Like fresh brownies
- 11 Artist's stand
- 12 Mumbai's nation
- 13 Aspiration
- 14 Secluded valleys
- 15 Retained
- 17 Caribou's kin
- 18 Pie producers
- 22 Give off
- 23 Acropolis setting
- 27 Scout shelters
- 29 Bright parrot
- 30 One with a rod and reel
- 32 Face feature
- 33 Periodic table items
- 35 Shop tool
- 38 Ruler length
- 39 Suspect's story
- 41 Gown part
- 45 Misplaces
- 46 Pizzeria buy
- 47 Comb parts
- 48 Oman neighbor

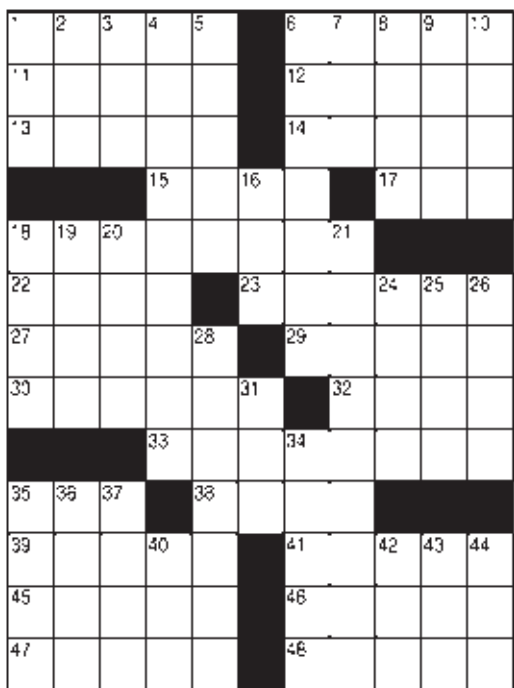
DOWN

- 1 Warning color
- 2 Lifeboat need
- 3 Take advantage of
- 4 Kitchen whistler
- 5 Fudd of cartoons
- 6 College exam
- 7 Count start
- 8 Not busy
- 9 Window part
- 10 Chore
- 16 Sty resident
- 18 Second letter
- 19 Prayer ender



Saturday's answer

- 20 "I have a dream" speaker
- 21 Marine jellyfish
- 24 Bus. sch. course
- 25 Play group
- 26 Rams' mates
- 28 Out for number one
- 31 Old auto
- 34 Like forest rocks
- 35 Shaker stuff
- 36 Lotion additive
- 37 Prudent
- 40 Track act
- 42 Crater part
- 43 Casino card
- 44 Signing need



1-9

AXYDLBAAXR IS LONGFELLOW

One letter stands for another. In this sample, A is used for the three L's, X for the two O's, etc. Single letters, apostrophes, the length and formation of the words are all hints. Each day the code letters are different.

1-9

CRYPTOQUOTE

R ERB XPUGSZU LZDLGPDT

PL HPNT, BSZ NDSX, DPJGU.

— I.UTWT YRMUPD

Saturday's Cryptoquote: I ASK NOT FOR A LIGHTER BURDEN, BUT FOR BROADER SHOULDERS. — JEWISH PROVERB

CES 2023: Smelling, touching take center stage in metaverse

By HALELUYA HADERO and RIO YAMAT

Associated Press

LAS VEGAS (AP) — Is the metaverse closer than we think? It depends on who you ask at CES, where companies are showing off innovations that could immerse us deeper into virtual reality, otherwise known as VR. The metaverse — essentially a buzzword for three-dimensional virtual communities where people can meet, work and play — was a key theme during the four-day tech gathering in Las Vegas that ends Sunday. Taiwanese tech giant HTC unveiled a high-end VR headset that aims to compete with market leader Meta, and a slew of other companies and startups touted augmented reality glasses and sensory technologies that can help users feel — and even smell — in a virtual environment. Among them, Vermont-based OVR Technology showcased a headset containing a cartridge with eight primary aromas that can be combined to create different scents. It's scheduled to be released later this year.

An earlier, business-focused version used primarily for marketing fragrances and beauty products is integrated into VR goggles and allows users to smell anything from a romantic bed of roses to a marshmallow roasting over a fire at a campsite.

The company says it aims to help consumers relax and is marketing the product, which comes with an app, as a sort of digital spa mixed with Instagram.

"We are entering an era in which extended reality will drive commerce, enter-



Attendees wear VR headsets while previewing the Caliverse Hyper-Realistic Metaverse experience at the Lotte booth during the CES tech show Friday, Jan. 6, 2023, in Las Vegas.

Associated Press

tainment, education, social connection, and well-being," the company's CEO and co-founder Aaron Wisniewski said in a statement. "The quality of these experiences will be measured by how immersive and emotionally engaging they are. Scent imbues them with an unmatched power."

But more robust and immersive uses of scent — and its close cousin, taste — are still further away on the innovation spectrum. Experts say even VR technologies that are more accessible are in the early days of their development and too expensive for many consumers to purchase. The numbers show there's waning interest. According to the research firm NPD Group, sales of VR headsets, which found popular use in gaming, declined by 2% last year, a sour note for companies betting big on more adoption. Still, big companies like Microsoft and Meta are investing billions. And many others are joining the race to grab some market share in supporting technologies, including wearables that replicate touch. Customers, though, aren't always impressed by what

they find. Ozan Ozaskinli, a tech consultant who traveled more than 29 hours from Istanbul to attend CES, suited up with yellow gloves and a black vest to test out a so-called haptics product, which relays sensations through buzzes and vibrations and stimulates our sense of touch.

Ozaskinli was attempting to punch in a code on a keypad that allowed him to pull a lever and unlock a box containing a shiny gemstone. But the experience was mostly a let-down.

"I think that's far from reality right now," Ozaskinli said. "But if I was considering it to replace Zoom meetings, why not? At least you can feel something."

Proponents say widespread adoption of virtual reality will ultimately benefit different parts of society by essentially unlocking the ability to be with anyone, anywhere at any time. Though it's too early to know what these technologies can do once they fully mature, companies looking to achieve the most immersive experiences for users are welcoming them with open arms.

Aurora Townsend, the chief marketing officer at Flare, a company slated to launch a VR dating app called Planet Theta next month, said her team is building its app to incorporate more sensations like touch once the technology becomes more widely available on the consumer market. □

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24/7

Bed Bath & Beyond warns about bankruptcy as sales slump

By ANNE D'INNOCENZIO

AP Retail Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Beleaguered Bed Bath & Beyond warned on Thursday that it may need to file for bankruptcy protection as it struggles to attract shoppers.

The Union, New Jersey-based home goods retailer said that it's looking at several options, including selling assets or restructuring its business in bankruptcy court. But it acknowledged that even those efforts may not be successful.

Its stock fell 30% and ended Thursday at \$1.69, its lowest level since November 1992. "There is substantial doubt about the company's ability to continue as a going concern," the retailer said in a statement.

The company's assessment came as its dismal performance extended through the holiday season.

Bed Bath & Beyond said it expects to report net sales of \$1.26 billion for the third quarter ended Nov. 26. That would be a 32% drop from a year earlier. It also anticipates a net loss of



Shoppers enter and exit a Bed Bath & Beyond in Schaumburg, Ill., Jan. 14, 2021.

Associated Press

roughly \$385.8 million for the third quarter, wider than its loss of \$276.4 million in the year-earlier period.

The company's recently appointed CEO and president, Sue Gove, blamed the poor performance on inventory constraints and reduced credit limits that resulted in shortages of merchandise on store shelves.

In August, Bed Bath & Beyond announced it would shutter stores and lay off workers in a bid to turn around its business. It closed

about 150 of its namesakes stores and slashed its workforce by 20%. It estimated those cuts would save \$250 million in the company's current fiscal year. It also said in August that it had lined up more than \$500 million of new financing.

Mired in a prolonged sales slump, the company also announced back in August that it would revert to its original strategy of focusing on national brands,

instead of pushing its own store labels.

That reversed a strategy embraced by its former CEO Mark Tritton, who was ousted last June after less than three years at the helm. The company said it would get rid of one-third of its store brands, which had started to be rolled out in the last year or so. Besides Bed Bath & Beyond, the company also runs the buybuy Baby and Harmon chains. □



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Sta. Cruz	527 2900
San Nicolas	584 5000
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Fire Dept.	115
Red Cross	582 2219

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A1 Taxi Serv.	280 2828

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WK 7 and 14 - all views

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3 Bed Ocean view \$13,000

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2 Bed Ocean view \$19,750
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1 Bed Ocean View \$12,000

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'RuPaul's Drag Race' cast push back against hate, threats

By JOHN CARUCCI

Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — As the cast of "RuPaul's Drag Race" celebrated the new season, they credited the show's creator with popularizing drag and expressed concern about the protests and threats to the performance style at the heart of the long-running series.

"RuPaul really brought drag into the mainstream, truly made people aware that it's an art form more than anything" contestant Marcia Marcia Marcia told The Associated Press at Thursday's season 15 premiere in New York. The new season starts Friday on MTV. "I think everyone was like fine with drag for a little bit," said the drag queen with the "Brady Bunch"-inspired name. "And now history is repeating itself and people are speaking out against it, which I think is so silly."

With a long and rich history, drag — the art of dressing as another gender, often for performance — has been attacked by right-wing politicians and activists who have falsely associated it with the "sexualization" and "grooming" of children. In recent months, protesters — sometimes bearing guns — have besieged drag story hours, during which performers read books to children. Bans on children at drag events have been



Drag performer Loosey LaDuca arrives at the season 15 premiere of "RuPaul's Drag Race" in New York on Thursday, Jan. 5, 2023.

floated. In late November, a shooter at a Colorado Springs nightclub turned a drag queen's birthday party into a massacre and was charged with hate crimes and murder.

Another contestant, Jax, said the threats, protests and hate were "disheartening" but not surprising: "Just like being a person of color, being a minority, growing up in certain communities, it's something that I've had to undergo my entire life."

"But we always prevail,"

Jax added. "We always prevail and we're always going to come out on top because we're on the right side of history and we love what we do and we're not doing anything to harm anybody. We're just trying to bring love to everything." To contestant Loosey LaDuca, as well, this is nothing new: "It is really unfortunate that during this time, drag queens have become the new target. But LGBT people are no stranger to being the, you know, the public enemy."

Meeting threats with caution is fine, LaDuca said, but "we'll never be scared."

Last month, New York City Councilman Erik Bottcher attended a drag story hour in his district. He filmed and posted video of "dozens of homophobic protesters outside with the most disgusting signs verbally attacking the families and the drag queen." Two days later, he said, anti-drag activists vandalized the hallway outside his office and gained entry to his apartment building.

Associated Press

"Two of them were arrested. A third was arrested for assaulting one of my neighbors," he told the AP at the premiere. "This is all an attempt to intimidate those of us supporting drag story hour."

Contestant Irene Dubois has a theory about what's behind the vitriol aimed at drag performers.

"I think a man in women's clothing is inherently hilarious just because we're like, (gasps) 'That's not supposed to happen!'" Dubois hypothesized. "And it's when the men in women's clothing stop sort of doing the nudge, nudge, wink, wink and start actually enjoying the way they look in the women's clothing that people start to sort of say, 'Wait, hold on, hold on, hold on. You're supposed to be laughing at yourself. And if you're not laughing at yourself, we don't like it.'"

"RuPaul's Drag Race" judge Ross Mathews paints the progress and regression as "a pendulum swinging." "The further we advance and the more that we are embraced, accepted, celebrated that pendulum — they're going to try to swing it back, to move our movement back," he says of anti-drag activists. "But you cannot put this genie back in the bottle. Darling, we are fabulous." □



Sarah Cooper poses for a portrait in the Brooklyn borough of New York, on Monday, Nov. 9, 2020.

Associated Press

By HILLEL ITALIE

AP National Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — The title alone of Sarah Cooper's upcoming memoir is a

hint that she doesn't plan to flatter herself. Cooper has a deal with Dutton, a Penguin Random House imprint, to write "Foolish:

Sarah Cooper memoir 'Foolish' scheduled for October release

Tales of Assimilation, Determination and Humiliation." The comedian, author and actor said in a statement Thursday that she hoped to "inspire everyone to risk embarrassing themselves." "I'm excited to share the story of what it's like being a Jamaican immigrant trying to succeed in this country and how that can often mean rejecting the things about you that make you, you. It's about how I realized I wanted to be an actress as soon as I was told I couldn't sing, and how I rejected that dream for more

sensible ones, including trying to find a man on Match.com, working at Google, buying a house and trying to have kids," she said.

"But the path I was trying to follow made me miserable. As hard as I've tried all my life to fit in, to look smart, to assimilate, I'm learning now to embrace my inability to fit into any box. I've always been terrified of looking like a fool but I've found the most power in being foolish and I can't wait to take readers on this very foolish journey."

"Foolish" is scheduled to

come out in October.

Cooper's previous books include "How to Be Successful Without Hurting Men's Feelings: Non-threatening Leadership Strategies for Women" and "100 Tricks to Appear Smart in Meetings: How to Get by Without Even Trying." She is known to many fans for her parody videos in which she lip-synced comments by then-President Donald Trump. She is expected to appear with Hugh Grant and Amy Schumer among others in Jerry Seinfeld's new movie, "Unfrosted." □

Shiffrin shows her emotions after matching Vonn's record

By ANDREW DAMPF

AP Sports Writer

KRANJSKA GORA, Slovenia

(AP) — The emotions came pouring out of Mikaela Shiffrin when she matched Lindsey Vonn's women's World Cup skiing record with her 82nd win Sunday. First there was a scream of delight following a serious case of nerves that had been building inside her throughout the day. Then came tears during the playing of the American anthem when her thoughts turned to her father, Jeff, who died three years ago. "My dad used to be there and taking pictures. Most races these days I'll think about him and I'm able to kind of refocus," Shiffrin said. "But when I'm singing the national anthem (it's different). It was just before I ever won my first World Cup, he said, 'You better memorize the words of the national anthem, because if you ever win, you better sing it.' And so I always think about him when I'm up there."

There were also an emotional embrace between Shiffrin and her mother, Eileen, who has coached the skier since childhood and been with her daughter every step of the way since her first World Cup win slightly more than a decade ago.

Shiffrin led from start to finish to win a giant slalom by a large margin and can now break Vonn's mark in a night slalom scheduled for Flachau, Austria, on Tuesday.

"I was so nervous this run. I have a rash on my face I was so nervous," Shiffrin said. "I don't know why, maybe a little bit was because of 82. I just really wanted to ski well, and I did."

Where other skiers struggled on a dark, bumpy and unusually steep course, Shiffrin was able to ski smoothly.

"It was a fight. But it was pretty amazing conditions and I got a report from the coaches and they were like, 'It's really attackable, so just go for it,'" she said. "I've been in this position

before and I've given it away and today I wanted to fight for it."

Already with eight wins this season, Shiffrin is also quickly approaching Ingemar Stenmark's overall record — between men and women — of 86 victories. Vonn retired four years ago when injuries ended her pursuit of Stenmark's record.

Vonn wrote in an AP diary that "if anyone is to break my record, I'm really happy that it's an American." Shiffrin and Vonn now each have 20 more wins than the next woman on the all-time list, Annemarie Moser-Pröll of Austria at 62.

While the often-injured Vonn required 395 races for her 82 wins, Shiffrin has done it in just 233 races.

And at age 27, Shiffrin could compete for several more years and win many more races.

"I knew from the very beginning that she would be the one to break all the records," Vonn wrote. "But to be able to do it at such a young age is really impressive."

Shiffrin's achievement comes almost a year after a disappointing performance at the Beijing Olympics, when she competed in six events without winning a medal.

Winning this race, though, never really seemed in doubt.

On an overcast morning, Shiffrin was the first starter and laid down a much more aggressive opening run than either of her two



United States' Mikaela Shiffrin celebrates winning an alpine ski, women's World Cup giant slalom race, in Kranjska Gora, Slovenia, Sunday, Jan. 8, 2023.

Associated Press

trips down the steep Podkoren course on Saturday, when she finished in a tie for sixth.

"I couldn't ski faster," Shiffrin said after her first run. "I felt

much, much better this first run than yesterday. I had to try to change my feeling from yesterday. It was very good skiing and I'm happy with that." □

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Bills celebrate Hamlin, beat Patriots 35-23; NE eliminated



Players gather for a prayer after an NFL football game between the Buffalo Bills and the New England Patriots, Sunday, Jan. 8, 2023, in Orchard Park.

Associated Press

By The Associated Press ORCHARD PARK, N.Y. (AP)

Nyheim Hines ignited an emotionally charged atmosphere celebrating injured Bills safety Damar Hamlin by returning two kickoffs for touchdowns, and Buffalo clinched the AFC's second playoff seed with a 35-23 win over the New England Patriots on Sunday.

The loss, coupled with Miami beating the New York Jets, eliminated the Patriots (8-9) from the playoffs for the second time in three years and just the fourth time in 23 seasons under coach Bill Belichick. Buffalo will host the division rival Dolphins in the wild-card round next weekend.

With the game in hand, Bills players held up three fingers in honor of Hamlin's number with the crowd chanting "Hamlin! Hamlin!" The Bills (13-3) closed their season by winning their final seven games and overcame an emotional week in which Hamlin collapsed after going into cardiac arrest and had to be resuscitated on the field in Cincinnati on Monday night.

Stefon Diggs, who visited Hamlin at the hospital immediately after that game, sealed the victory on Sun-

day with a 49-yard touchdown catch from Josh Allen to put Buffalo ahead 35-23 with 8:51 remaining. Allen finished 19 of 31 for 254 yards with three touchdowns and an interception. The Patriots needed only a win to clinch a playoff berth, but wound up closing the season with five losses in seven games. Mac Jones finished 26 of 40 for 243 yards and three touchdowns, including two to DeVante Parker, and three interceptions — all in the second half.

DOLPHINS 9, JETS 6

MIAMI GARDENS, Fla. (AP) — Jason Sanders kicked a go-ahead 50-yard field goal with 18 seconds left, and Miami beat New York to make the playoffs for the first time since 2016.

The banged-up Dolphins (9-8) snapped a five-game losing streak and then had to wait a few minutes for Buffalo to defeat New England to make their postseason appearance official. Seventh-seeded Miami will play at second-seeded Buffalo next weekend. The AFC East rivals split the season series with each winning at home.

Neither team scored a touchdown with rookie Skylar Thompson starting

at quarterback for the Jets and veteran Joe Flacco under center for the Dolphins. But Thompson did enough on the Dolphins' final possession, moving them 36 yards in eight plays to set up Sanders' decisive kick. Thompson completed 20 of 31 passes for 152 yards.

The Jets (7-10) ended the season with six straight losses. New York failed to score a touchdown in its final three games.

On the Jets' last play, they lateraled the ball a few times before Elijah Moore fumbled, Garrett Wilson recovered and he was tackled in the end zone for a safety.

BENGALS 27, RAVENS 16

CINCINNATI (AP) — Joe Burrow threw for a touchdown and Joe Mixon ran for another as Cincinnati took advantage of four Baltimore turnovers to set up a rematch in the first round of the playoffs next week.

The AFC North champion Bengals (12-4) — playing on the same field where Buffalo's Damar Hamlin suffered cardiac arrest in a horrifying scene six days ago — beat a Ravens team that rested some key players ahead of the postseason. Cincinnati closed the regular season with eight straight wins.

Cincinnati also avoided a coin flip to determine the site of its playoff game against Baltimore. The Bengals were unhappy with the prospect of a coin flip costing them a home playoff game and mocked the rule change with a coin-flip celebration after Mixon's TD.

Cincinnati's chances at the No. 2 seed in the AFC ended when Buffalo beat New England.

The Ravens (10-7) fought gamely behind rookie third-stringer Anthony Brown, who got the start after

throwing just five passes all season. But rather than go all-out for the slim chance of getting a home playoff game, Ravens coach John Harbaugh ensured the Bengals will see a somewhat different team when sixth-seeded Baltimore returns to Paycor Stadium next weekend. Ravens starting quarterback Lamar Jackson (knee) and backup Tyler Huntley were inactive, and the Ravens rested two of their biggest offensive weapons, Mark Andrews and J.K. Dobbins. Brown threw two interceptions and lost a fumble that was recovered for a touchdown.

STEELERS 28, BROWNS 14

PITTSBURGH (AP) — Najee Harris ran for 84 yards and a touchdown and Pittsburgh beat Cleveland but was eliminated from the playoffs when Miami edged the New York Jets.

The Steelers (9-8) will have to settle for a 16th straight non-losing season under coach Mike Tomlin, fueled by a 7-2 finish. Pittsburgh's ugly 2-6 start included an injury to star linebacker T.J. Watt and rookie quarterback Kenny Pickett's ascension to the starting job at halftime of a Week 4 loss to the Jets.

Pickett completed 13 of 29 passes for 195 yards and a touchdown and avoided an interception for the sixth time in his last seven appearances.

Pittsburgh's defense sacked Deshaun Watson seven times to assure the Steelers of finishing ahead of the Browns (7-10) in the standings for the 34th consecutive time.

Cleveland has had 17 seasons of 10 losses or more since the franchise rebooted in 1999.

Watson, who was suspended for the first 11 games of

the season for violating the league's personal conduct policy, connected on 19 of 29 passes for 230 yards with two touchdowns and two interceptions, both of which the Steelers turned into points. Nick Chubb ran for 77 yards and caught a touchdown pass to join Jim Brown as the only players in Browns history to exceed 1,500 yards rushing in a season.

FALCONS 30, BUCCANEERS 17

ATLANTA (AP) — Rookie Desmond Ridder's first two career touchdown passes powered Atlanta past playoff-bound Tampa Bay after Tom Brady broke his own NFL record for completions in a season.

Brady left the game late in the first half with the score tied at 10. He had been 11-0 in his career against Atlanta, including New England's 34-28 win over the Falcons in the Super Bowl following the 2016 season.

The Falcons can now claim to be responsible for Brady's first losing final record in a regular season.

Brady and Tampa Bay's other healthy regulars started even though the Buccaneers (8-9) had secured the NFC South title and were locked in as the NFC's No. 4 seed in the playoffs.

Brady began the day needing nine completions to top his 2021 single-season record of 485. He set the mark on a 5-yard pass to Russell Gage, the former Falcons receiver, early in the second quarter. Brady finished with 490 completions.

Rookie Tyler Allgeier rushed for 135 yards on 24 carries to end the fifth consecutive losing season for Atlanta (7-10), which finished with back-to-back wins under second-year coach Arthur Smith. □